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News Release

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Methamphetamine prosecutions continue to climb

Methamphetamine is one of the most popular illegal drugs in Minnesota, according to the Hazelden Foundation, and federal officials continue to stop those distributing this dangerous and addictive drug as several indictments were handed out last week.

A federal grand jury in Minneapolis indicted eight men Dec. 3 on counts of methamphetamine possession and distribution.

Charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute methamphetamine, a highly addictive and dangerous drug, are: Ismael Ramirez-Cortez, unknown age, Chicago; Gerardo Ramos, unknown age, Chicago; Jerry Littlejohn, unknown age, Chicago; Aaron Clayton Durand, 37, St. Paul; Gerardo Mata Solis, 25, a Mexican citizen living in St. Paul; Anthony Thomas Hernandez, 40, St. Paul; Brian Keith Zweber, unknown age, West St. Paul; and Darrin Joseph Nelson, 34, Lino Lakes.

Also charged with one count of aiding and abetting possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine were Ramos, Littlejohn and Zweber. Ramirez-Cortez was also charged with two counts of aiding and abetting possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, and both Nelson and Solis were each charged with an additional count of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

The indictment alleges that between November 2006 through June 2007, the eight conspired to possess with intent to possess and distribute 50 or more grams of methamphetamine.

If convicted, each faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison on all counts. Nelson would face an additional potential maximum penalty of 40 years on his possession with intent to distribute charge. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force, and it is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney David P. Steinkamp.

In a separate indictment filed on Dec. 4, a 25-year-old illegal immigrant living in

Maplewood was charged with methamphetamine and cocaine possession. Ediberto Izazaga Gomez was charged with two counts of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine and one count of possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

Gomez's indictment alleges that on Nov. 6, 2007, he knowingly and intentionally possessed with intent to distribute 550 or more grams of a substance containing methamphetamine, as well as 500 or more grams of a substance containing cocaine.

If convicted, Gomez's faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison on the first methamphetamine possession charge, 40 years in prison on the second methamphetamine possession charge and 40 years on the cocaine possession charge. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Dakota County Drug Task Force, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office and the Maplewood Police Department, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Tracy L. Perzel.

According to the Hazelden Foundation in 2006, methamphetamine addiction accounted for 8 percent of treatment admissions in the Twin Cities, and 480 methamphetamine-related hospital emergency department episodes were reported in the Twin Cities.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.